THE

EPISTLE

FROM THE

YEARLY MEETING,

HELD IN

LONDON,

By ADJOURNMENTS, from the 18th to the 27th of the Fifth Month, 1795, inclusive,

To the *QUARTERLY* and *MONTHLY MEETINGS* of *FRIENDS*, in *GREAT BRITAIN*, *IRELAND*, and elsewhere.

DEAR Friends, and Brethren in our common cause—the endeavour to promote in our generation the righteousness of Christ, by obedience to his Spirit operating in the heart—how awful is our profession; and what manner of men ought we to be, in all godliness and honesty, that our practice may correspond with it! Religion is not a speculative thing, but a practical duty; and, at this yearly meeting, we have been renewedly made desirous that our members may be more and more diligent, in support of the testimonies which we believe ourselves bound, in our conduct, to bear to the world. Thus impressed, we tenderly salute you, and inform you that we have reason to believe, from the examination that we have made into the state of our Society, that the cause of Truth gains ground; that the visitation of divine love continues to be extended, by faithfulness to which a growth in the Truth is experienced; and that our Christian discipline is supported with increasing vigour.

The account of sufferings brought in this year, chiefly for tithes, priests-demands, and those called church-rates, amounts in Britain to Six thousand three hundred and eighty-one pounds; and in Ireland, to One thousand two hundred and ninety-two pounds. Seven members of our society are lately committed to prison, by an Exchequer process, on account of our testimony against Tithes. We wish their allotment may prove a call to those among us, who do not come up with their brethren in this testimony, afresh to consider the foundation of it: namely, a desire to be clear in the sight of the Shepherd and Bishop of Souls, from supporting a ministry of human ordination, exercising its functions for lucre, and tending to divert the attention of the people from the secret instruction of His all-sufficient Spirit. Divers have been the admonitions of this meeting to these unfaithful brethren, and clear the

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proviſion of our diſcipline againſt their confirmed neglect: but, O, Friends of this deſcription, how much more deſirable is it to gain you by perſuaſion, and to perceive your judgments convinced by the light of truth, than to treat you as delinquents! Lay aſide therefore your former prejudices. Suffer not the cuſtoms of men, the proſpect of inconvenience, or the fear of appearing to differ from your intimates, ſo to influence your minds, as to make your deviations even deſirable in your view. Be ſure alſo that other inconſiſtencies with the ſelf-denying character of a Chriſtian, do not keep you at a diſtance from that point of view, in which ye may clearly ſee your duty in this reſpect. How do you attend your religious meetings? What ſhare have the honour and the gain of the world in your affections? Is the eye ſo ſingle, that ye can be certain your judgment is right? Theſe are important conſiderations: ſuffer them then to have due place in your minds.

We have this year received epiſtles from the yearly meetings of New York, of Pennſylvania, of Maryland, and of Virginia, whereby we learn the continued engagement of our friends to be of ſervice to mankind in their generation. From Pennſylvania we have a freſh account of the good underſtanding between our friends and the Indian natives; who have again invited them to a treaty held for compoſing the differences on the frontiers. A deputation of friends accordingly, with the approbation of the government, attended, laſt fall, at a treaty, at which, beſides having the ſatisfaction of ſeeing in ſome meaſure the good purpoſes of the conference anſwered, they had freſh proof of the good and permanent effects which kind treatment produces in the minds even of ſuch as are termed uncivilized men, in the reſpect in which the Indians hold the memory of the firſt founder of Pennſylvania, and in whoſe ſucceſſors in religious profeſſion, they continue to place a confidence almoſt unlimited.

In ſome of the States, we find friends have been anxious to promote an increaſing attention to the procuring an education for the deſcendants of the black people, ſuited to their ſtation, and which may render them fit to become uſeful members of the community: and this, on the principle which, in moſt things undertaken by men, is a ſure guide to doing right, and producing good effects; namely, the deſire to do to others as we would they ſhould do to us.

Our Friends of New England have been engaged in an application to the general government of the United States, againſt the Slave Trade; and have obtained an alteration of the law, in great meaſure anſwerable to their expectation. We wiſh the ſympathy of Friends here, for the injured people whoſe ſufferings are more nearly connected with this our native land, had been by this time more productive of benefit. On a caſe of diſtreſs ſo deep, and neglect ſo unfeeling, it is not always eaſy for the human mind to reflect, without bitter cenſure on the authors of their woes. But, Friends, a feeling hath been witneſſed amongſt us at this time, which directs the mind in pity towards the deplorable ſtate of thoſe men, who promote, procure, and execute, the tearing away of the Africans from their parent ſoil: and ſeeing we believe that a juſt and dreadful retribution awaits the unrepenting and obdurate oppreſſor, at that awful tribunal where ſophiſtry ſhall not prevail to exculpate, let us, amidſt all our ſympathy for the ſufferers, give place in our minds to a true concern for the Traders in Negroes—men equally intereſted with us in the rewards of futurity—and let us ſeek for, and cheriſh, that diſpoſition

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of mind, which can pray for theſe enemies of humanity, and fervently breathe for their reſtoration to ſoundneſs of judgment, and purity of principle.

It hath been often obſerved that the deſire of acquiring wealth is an incitement to every evil; and having, in this inſtance, a proof to what great lengths it will carry thoſe who give it place in their hearts, let us guard againſt the beginnings of ſo great temptation. Circumſcribed even as we are more than many, it is not unuſual, in our purſuit of the things of this life, for our gain and our convenience to claſh with our teſtimony. O then may we be willing to pauſe, and give time for thoſe paſſions to ſubſide, which would hurry us to the accompliſhment of the deſired purpoſe, ere the ſtill voice of wiſdom be diſtinctly heard to guide us in the way in which we ſhould go. And, beloved youth in an eſpecial manner, guard againſt the firſt ſacrifices of duty to inclination. If ye curb inordinate deſires in their infancy, your victory over future temptations will be the more eaſy; and, through faith in him that hath loved us, and hath overcome, ye will in time be more than conquerors: but if ye ſhrink from the conflict, or reſign the victory to the tempter, ye will be deſpoiled of the armour deſigned to preſerve you in future aſſaults; and, it may be, unable to reſiſt, in your further progreſs through life, temptations, which, in the freſh morning of your day, ye would have held in abhorrence.

We have endeavoured, in the two laſt years, to caution our brethren in profeſſion, againſt ſuffering the commotions of the times to ſeduce them from the path of blameleſs ſimplicity, in which it becomes all true followers of Chriſt to walk. And though we deſire not to repeat ſimilar advice, we think it incumbent on us now to bid you beware of being induced, either inadvertently or for gain, in any manner to give countenance to the deſtroying practice of War. Many are the ways by which the unwary and the covetous may be caught. But, brethren, look beyond the ſurface. Behold the depth of miſery into which war plunges mankind. Then, putting your truſt in Him who gives underſtanding to the ſimple, and provides for the ſparrows, ye may avoid the pollution which is theirs, who join hands with this deſolating evil.

Signed in and on behalf of the Meeting, by

LAWRENCE CANDLER,

Clerk to the Meeting this Year.

Yearly Epiſtle,

1795.